A STUDY OF FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE NOVELS OF ASHAPOORNA DEVI, SUCHITRA BHATTACHARYA AND TILOTTAMA MOJUMDAR

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

to

Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies

(Deemed to be University)

by

Kajal Chaudhary

Registration number: 18/Ph.D/020

Under the supervision of

Dr. Shivani Vashist

Professor& HOD, Department of English, FMEH

FACULTY OF MEDIA STUDIES AND HUMANITIES

MANAV RACHNA INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH & STUDIES

SECTOR-43, SURAJKUND –DELHI ROAD, FARIDABAD

FACULTY OF MEDIA STUDIES AND HUMANITIES (FMEH)

Certificate

I hereby declare that the short synopsis **A Study of Feminist Consciousness in the novels of Ashapoorna Devi, Suchitra Bhattacharya and Tilottama Mojumdar** being submitted in partial fulfillment of the **requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English under the Faculty of Media Studies and Humanities (FMEH) of Manav Rachna International Institute of Research & Studies, Faridabad during the academic year 2018-2019. It is a bonafide record of original work carried out under the supervision of Dr. Shivani Vashist and has not been submitted in full or part to any other university or institute for degree or diploma. Further, it is certified that short synopsis is plagiarism free and proof has been submitted.**

Kajal 4/2/2020

(Kajal Chaudhary)

Registration number : 18/Ph.D/020

Shivani Vashist 4/2/20

Signature of the Supervisor

Dr. Shivani Vashist

Professor & HOD, Department of English

FMEH, MRIIRS

Shivani Vashist 4/2/20

(Chairman, DRC)

(Chairperson, CDP)

ABSTRACT

The research work aims at a feminist discussion about the condition of women in the works of Indian Bengali women writers. It will explore the literary presence of the women inside the four walls of the house being suppressed by the patriarchal society. The works in this study articulate the social concern about the marginalized status of women in the family and society, the isolation and humiliation they have to face and the physical, emotional and mental challenges they have to suffer, and their continuous struggle against the pre-decided traditional roles set for them by male- dominated society. Women have been historically dominated and have faced many challenges and obstacles to become an important part in the society and with arise of feminist consciousness in the society a new light has been reflected on the subjugation of women.

All the writers under discussion namely Ashapoorna Devi, Suchitra Bhattacharya and Tilottama Mojumdar try to highlight how women have always been dominated by men in the past and how they were never given any rights and neglected and humiliated by men. I wish to explore the aspirations, dreams, desires and the determination of women characters to change their position in the society. I will also aim to examine how these works bring feminist consciousness in the society and at what maximum limit women could succeed while trying to restore their identity in the world being in their domestic space.

This research will aim to analyze how women are treated in the society, their traumas and helplessness, their continuous struggle against their subjugation by men and their efforts to assert their individuality and create an identity for themselves.

Key words:

Oppression, Patriarchy, Women's emancipation, Feminism, Feminist Consciousness

CONTENTS

S. No.	Description	Page No.
1	Introduction	1-3
2	Literature Review	4-7
3	Description of Broad Area	7
4	Objectives of the Study	8
5	Methodology to be adopted	8
6	Proposed Outcome of the Research	8
7	References	9

INTRODUCTION:

From time immemorial the male-oriented power structure has existed in society. Women have been engaged in the struggle against patriarchal domination. The selfhood of woman is controlled by patriarchal ideals of wifehood and motherhood. A woman is always treated as an "object". The constricting forces of patriarchy have trapped woman and so she is a silent sufferer of all the humiliation and exploitation meted out to her by the male dominated power structure. The male-centric society has created different gender roles where a man is 'superior' and 'power bearer' while a woman is 'inferior' and 'submissive'. A woman has always been the "other" or "second sex". But with the changing times, women started to explore and reconstruct womanliness and redefine the gender based constructs in order to achieve equality. The sensitization of feminist consciousness has motivated the subaltern to find their voice. With the advent of feminist consciousness the issues like gender stereotyping, marginalization and subjugation of women are now being given due attention. This has also led to the exploration and redefining of the themes of race, gender, hierarchy, sexuality, colonialism, post-colonialism and the question of identity and individuality, heralding new consciousness.

The evolution of feminism has led to the transformation of feminist consciousness. Feminism as a movement has altered the perception of society. Feminism aims at establishing, determining and understanding the critical issues like male hegemony, hierarchal structure, subjugation and marginalization of women. Feminism advocates that women should be given equal social, political and economic rights. The ultimate aim of feminism is to recognize, transform and emancipate women from male domination. The feminists investigated about the unjust marginalization of women, the upsurge of feminist consciousness and empowerment of women. By the consciousness and feminine sensibility of feminist writers there has been departure from the selfless angels to selfhood individuals.

In the Puranas, Smrithis and Vedas also there has been mention of women's subordinate dependent status. Since ages the male chauvinism has resulted in female enslavement. However, with the arrival of feminist writers there has been a breakthrough from the shackles

of subordination towards the attainment of individuality. But these women writers also had to face lot of condemnation. Men have always indirectly controlled what women should write but women dared to express their thoughts and ventured outside in the public domain.

The feminist women writers of the 20th century raised awareness about the pathetic plight of women and promoted the idea of equality through their writings. One of the most famous writers of the 20th century was Simone de Beauvoir. Her work *The Second Sex* explored the woman's world and her search for self-identity. Virginia Woolf was another prominent writer who brought into light the inner life of women. Her very famous works like *Mrs. Dalloway* and *A Poem of One's Own* disapprove of the male hegemony. Sylvia Plath wrote several poems on the oppression and objectification of women and her works have inspired millions. Toni Morrison's famous work *Beloved* (1988) explores the feminist consciousness. She points out the uninterrupted patriarchal set-up which has subjugated women. She gives voice to the unheard women and encourages the liberation struggle.

These women writers received fame in the mainstream literature in the world and heralded feminist consciousness. India was also not left untouched by this. Indian women writers also gained momentum throughout the world and have exposed the patriarchal ideologies obstructing the feminist growth. The Indian women writers have highlighted the repressive social structure and the subordinate position of women with great feminist sensibility in their works. Indian Women writers like Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal, Bharti Mukherjee, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy, Mahasweta Devi, Jhumpa Lahiri and many more have ushered feminist consciousness in the society through their writings.

Even Bengali feminist writing has also been continuing this trend in its own way. Bengali women writers were also trying to make their prominent place in the literary landscape which they got after their works were translated. There have been incredible Bengali women writers who produced some of the most critical literature of all times. One of the most prominent writers in Bengali literature, Ashapoorna Devi critically questioned the patriarchal canvas of our society in her works and highlighted the struggle of women against the patriarchal society. She has received Rabindra Puraskar and Bharatiya Jnanpith Award. She has published 181 novels, 38 anthologies of short stories and 52 children's books. *Pratham*

Pratisruti translated as *The First Promise*, *Subarnalata*, *Satyabati* and *Bakul Katha* are some of her spectacular works.

Suchitra Bhattarcharya is another women writer in Bengali literature, who raised her voice against the barbaric treatment of females. She sharply criticized the gender inequality and through the protagonists of her novels highlighted the feminist consciousness. She has received Sahitya Setu Award, Katha Award, Bharat Nirman Award, and several others. *Dahan: The Burning*, *Hemanter Pakhi* translated as *Autumn Bird* and *Kancher Dewal* are some of her notable works.

One of the most creative Bengali women writers Tilottama Mojumdar also primarily concentrated on feminist consciousness. Her literary archive provides a kaleidoscope of the status of women and their struggle against the patriarchal society. Her spellbinding works include *The Roundel Moons* and *Ektara: Strains of a Lonesome String*. She has received Anondo Puroshkar, Sailjanananda Smriti Puruskar, Sarot Sriti Puroshkar and several others.

The Bengali women writers vividly focussed on the gender biasness and the sexist mindset of men. They have creatively portrayed the domestic space of women and have shown their subjugation, distress, growing consciousness and awakening of inner conscience and their revolt against their suppression by male chauvinists. For women writers in Bengal, penning fiction was a way to challenge patriarchal norms. For my research I intend to take the works of these three Bengali women writers. The aim of my research will be to trace the contribution of Bengali women writers and observe the status of their female characters as a mirror of the position of women in the society.

The purpose of my research will also be to explore how women have been subjugated and marginalized. The condition of subordination of women is not natural, but societal determined. Women are always treated as "other" or "second sex" and have been merely reduced as the sexual object. The focus of my study is to analyze how women are treated in the society, the traumas and helplessness of them, their continuous struggle against their subjugation by men and their efforts to assert their individuality create an identity for themselves.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Literature Review on Feminism

***The Second Sex* - Simone de Beauvoir (1952)**

In *The Second Sex (1952)*, Simone de Beauvoir analyzes the notion of "woman" and explores the woman's search for her own identity. She said "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman". She described a woman as "Other". She also notes that a "woman" has always been defined by men "No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine".

***Critical Responses to Feminism* edited by Binod Mishra (2006)**

The anthology *Critical Responses to Feminism* (2006) edited by Binod Mishra presents the views of various researchers and scholars on famous feminist writers like Sylvia Plath, Toni Morrison, Shobha De, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Das, Nayantara Sehgal, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur and many more. This anthology makes the readers realize that women's writing is indispensable part of literature. The wave of feminism has forced the writers to rethink about their interpretations in their works. It discusses how the Indian writers in English have brought women into light and present their voyage from subjugation to freedom through their self-assertion. The anthology presents the in-depth observation of the feminist writers.

***Sexual Politics*- Kate Millett (1970)**

Kate Millett in her book *Sexual Politics* (1970) analyses how male hegemony is spread throughout the society. She critiques the portrayal of patriarchy by male writers in their works. She asserts that there should not be any gender biasness.

Literature Review on Feminist Consciousness

***Gender Disparity in India Unheard Whimpers* – Siuli Sarkar (2016)**

Siuli Sarkar in her book Gender *Disparity in India Unheard Whimpers* (2016) has discussed about the status of women in India. The book also discusses about the Bengali writers like Suchitra Bhattacharya who emphasizes about gender equality in her works. The book provides comprehensive analysis of Gender disparity, feminist revolutionary movements, dilemma of women and their revolt for autonomy to attain the status of a 'human being'.

***Feminism in Indian Writing in English* - by Dr. Amar Nath Prasad and Dr. S.K. Paul (2006)**

The book *Feminism in Indian Writing in* English (2006) written by Dr. Amar Nath Prasad and Dr. S.K. Paul gives a comprehensive description of gender discrimination, feminist consciousness and the perspectives of feminism in Indian writing in English. The book critically evaluates how the Indian writers argue about gender inequality, stereotyping, experiences of women and their assertion for identity. Various papers on Indian feminist writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Gita Mehta, Manju Kapur, Mahasweta Devi and many more have been discussed at length.

Contemporary Indian Writing in English : Critical Perceptions vol.ll* - Edited by N.D.R. Chandra *(2005)

The anthology *Contemporary Indian Writing in English: Critical Perceptions vol.ll* (2005) edited by N.D.R.Chandra is a critical study about various renowned writers of contemporary India like Ashapoorna Devi, Jhumpa Lahiri, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Shobha De, Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Mahesh Dattani and a few more. The papers discuss how with the emergence of post-colonial literature the contemporary Indian writers have gained the recognition. It also discusses about feminist consciousness in the novels of contemporary women writers. It reviews how Ashapoorna Devi in her novel *Subarnalata* expresses the conflict between tradition and modernity. It discusses the male superiority that leads the gender biasness.

Signifying the Self : Women and Literature **- by Malashri Lal, Shormishtha Panja, Sumanyu Satpathy (2004)**

The anthology *Signifying the Self: Women and Literature* (2004) by Malashri Lal, Shormishtha Panja, Sumanyu Satpathy discusses about the literary feminism. It is a comprehensive collection of papers and essays that explores the various aspects of feminism in India. It is a vivid portrayal of feminist works from every corner of India - Bengal, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. It notes the regional writers and the issues they present in their works. Rabindranath Tagore to Mahasweta Devi, Deepa Mehta to Ismat Chugtai - all the Indian writers who interrogate on feminism have been discussed in this anthology.

Literature Review on Bengali Women Writers

Fiction as Resistance: Perspectives from colonial and contemporary Bengal **- Aparna Bandyopadhyay (2017)**

Aparna Bandyopadhyay in her paper *Fiction as Resistance: Perspectives from colonial and contemporary Bengal (2017)* focusses on the feminist literature written by women writers in colonial and contemporary Bengal. She has shown how women novelists in Bengal challenged patriarchal societal norms. The book discusses how the women dared to express their thoughts by writing novels, which was considered to be a taboo and was harshly condemned. Earlier the writers like Ashapoorna Devi remained confined in their domestic space and later ventured outside in the public domain and therefore trespassing into the male domain.

The paper discusses how the Bengali women writers through their fictional works resisted against the patriarchy. The women writers protested against the oppression of females through their works.

Ashapurna Devi and Feminist Consciousness in Bengal: A Bio-critical Reading **- by Dipannita Datta (2014)**

Dipannita Datta in her book *Asha Purna Devi and Feminist Consciousness in Bengal: A Bio-critical Reading* (2014) reviews Ashapoorna Devi, one of the most prominent women writers of India. The book engages a critical insight on feminist consciousness in India. It analyzes the issues of feminism in South Asia. It presents the insight of the societal changes in Bengal which were witnessed by Ashapoorna Devi. Datta elaborates upon the uniqueness of Ashapoorna Devi through which she becomes the voice of the Bengali women, exposes the system of patriarchy and challenges hegemony. Datta explains "Ashapurna's essays delve deep into the tensions, conflict, ambiguity and tragedy that had been naturalized in the historical process and show that women can get past 'the gruelling grind of their working world, and fulfill the demands of the changing times and public life". (145)

***Towards Women's Liberation : The Novels of Ashapurna Devi and Sulekha Sanyal* – by R. Mridula (2012)**

The book *Towards Women's Liberation: The Novels of Ashapurna Devi and Sulekha Sanyal* (2012) written by R. Mridula explains about the various significant feminist issues discussed by Ashapoorna Devi and Sulekha Sanyal in their novels. Both have delved deep into the inner recesses of women characters and have made women-oriented novels. They both have been the finest writers of the feminist consciousness in India.

DESCRIPTION OF BROAD AREA:

The research work on **A Study of Feminist Consciousness in the novels of Ashapoorna Devi, Suchitra Bhattacharya and Tilottama Mojumdar** shares the need to understand how the women characters were treated in the works of the above mentioned writers. Since time immemorial the constricting forces of patriarchy have trapped women. A woman has always been suppressed and subjugated at the hands of the male chauvinist society. It, therefore, becomes important for female writers to mirror the behaviour towards women, through their works.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To discuss the theoretical perspective of feminist consciousness.
2. To analyze the feminist consciousness in the texts of women writers.
3. To evaluate the feminist consciousness in the works of Bengali women writers.
4. To explore the attempt of women characters to establish themselves equal to men in all aspects.
5. To compare and contrast the works of the three writers.

METHODOLOGY TO BE ADOPTED:

1. The research will be qualitative, explorative and illustrative.
2. The in-depth study of primary and secondary sources will be done.
3. The novels being dealt will be properly read and observed with the said objectives in mind. They will be examined in relation with the social and cultural milieu.
4. The research work will be observed on theory, source and text to explore the present condition of women and how these works will bring consciousness in the society.

PROPOSED OUTCOME OF THE RESEARCH:

1. The research will be able to make society understand the theoretical perspective of feminist consciousness.
2. The research will highlight the feminist consciousness in the works of women writers, particularly Bengali women writers.
3. The research will also emphasize the quest of the women characters to assert their individuality and identity against gender hegemony.
4. The research will establish points of similarity and dissimilarity in the works of these three writers.

REFERENCES:

Bandyopadhyay , Aparna. *Fiction as Resistance: Perspectives from colonial and contemporary Bengal.* Journal of History,Volume V, Vidyasagar University, ISSN 2321-0834, 2017.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Translated by Howard Parshley. London: Picador Classics, 1988.

Chandra, N.D.R. *Contemporary Indian Writing in English: Critical Perceptions vol.ll*. New Delhi: Sarup& Sons, 2005.

Datta, Dipannita. *.Asha Purna Devi and Feminist Consciousness in Bengal: A Bio-critical Reading*. USA: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Joseph, Dr. Anila (ed.). *Gender in Blosssom.* New Delhi: Ane Books Pvt. Ltd., 2012.

Kurien, Sobhana (ed.). *Breaking the Silence: An Anthology of Women's Literature*. New Delhi: Ane Books Pvt. Ltd. ,2012.

Lal, Malashri, Shormishtha Panja, Sumanyu Satpathy. *Signifying the Self: Women and Literature*. New Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd., 2004.

Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics.* New York: Doubleday, Garden City, 1970.

Mishra, Binod (ed.). *Critical Responses to Feminism*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2006.

Mridula, R. *Towards Women's Liberation: The Novels of Ashapurna Devi and Sulekha Sanyal*. New Delhi: Prestige Books International, 2012.

Prasad, Amar Nath., and Dr. S.K. Paul Feminism in Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2006.

Sarkar, Siuli. *Gender Disparity in India Unheard Whimpers*. Delhi : PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., 2016.

MANAV RACHNA
Vidyaniketan

Dr. O.P. Bhalla Central Library
Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies
(A deemed-to-be-university under section 3 of UGC Act 1956)

SIMILARITY VERIFICATION CERTIFICATE

Title: A STUDY OF FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE NOVELS OF ASHAPOORNA DEVI, SUCHITRA BHATTACHARYA AND TILOTTAMA MOJUMDAR

Researcher: KAJAL CHAUDHARY Registration Number: 18/Ph.D/020

Supervisor: DR. SHIVANI VASHIST Department: Department of English

This is to certify that the above mentioned Short Synopsis/~~Thesis~~ was scanned for similarity index through Turnitin Software on 24-Oct-2019 withsubmission ID 1199408286 and the similarity index is found to be 8 %. The complete report running into 15 Pages, 3006 Word count with File Size 2543 KBis being forwarded to the Research Supervisor/DRC/DRB for review

Date: 30/X/19

Dr. Vikram Kr. Sharma
University Librarian
Dr. O.P. Bhalla Central Library
Manav Rachna International
Institute of Research & Studies
University Librarian

The complete report of the above Short Synopsis/~~Thesis~~ has been reviewed and the similarity index is below the accepted norms as per the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations 2018. The Short Synopsis/~~Thesis~~ may be considered for further processing

Kajal 30/10/19
Research Scholar

Shivani Vashist
Research Supervisor
30/X/19

Shivani Vashist 4/2/2020

Kajal

SHORT SYNOPSIS Kajal Chaudhary OCT 24,2019

by Kajal Chaudhary

Submission date: 24-Oct-2019 04:40PM (UTC+0530)
Submission ID: 1199408286
File name: SHORT_SYNOPSIS_Kajal_Chaudhary_OCT_24,2019.docx (35.19K)
Word count: 3006
Character count: 16769

Kajal

Student Paper 1%

10 Submitted to Bowling Green State University 1%
Student Paper

Exclude quotes On
Exclude bibliography On
Exclude matches < 14 words